

**AA-4**

**Built 1934-1939**

**Governor Ritchie Highway (Rt. 2)**

**Annapolis to Baltimore**

**USGS Quads: Annapolis, Gibson Island,  
Round Bay & Curtis Bay**

**Site**

Ritchie Highway is significant as Maryland's first dual highway and the first state road built with the mandate to preserve natural and scenic beauty. Originally named Annapolis Boulevard it was posthumously renamed in honor of Maryland Governor Albert C. Ritchie, who greatly advanced Maryland's road system to one of the best in the nation.

Built as a direct and scenic route between Annapolis and Baltimore, Ritchie Highway was constructed at a cost of 2.25 million dollars. Most of the funding was provided by the federal Public Works Administration. Despite appeals to keep the highway free from unsightly and transportation-hindering development, Ritchie Highway grew into an important commercial corridor and became the locus of some of the state's commercial first, including the first enclosed shopping mall east of the Mississippi River.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. AA-4

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

### 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Annapolis Boulevard

and/or common Governor Ritchie Highway (Rt. 2)

### 2. Location

street & number 44.1 miles between Annapolis (at Rt. 450) and Baltimore ☐ not for publicationcity, town various ☐ vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Anne Arundel

### 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

### 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Maryland Department of Transportation

street &amp; number 707 North Calvert Street telephone no.: 1-800-323-6742

city, town Baltimore state and zip code: Maryland 21203

### 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Anne Arundel County Courthouse liber various

street &amp; number Franklin Street folio

city, town Annapolis state Maryland

### 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Survey No. AA-4

Condition		Check one		Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site		
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed				

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Ritchie Highway (Rt. 2) is a 44.1 mile-long, state-maintained, asphalt-paved, dual highway. It is bounded on the south by the Severn River, where it becomes Rt. 450, and on the north by Baltimore City's corporate limits, at which time it changes to Hanover Street.

Constructed as a direct but scenic route between Annapolis and Baltimore, Ritchie Highway runs in a straight north-westerly path from Annapolis to Glen Burnie. Here, at the intersection with Crain Highway (Rt. 3), it turns east, then gradually corrects and travels north until its termination at the Baltimore City line.

Ritchie Highway was built with two 20' lanes traveling in either direction, separated by a 6' grass and/or tree-lined median. As opposed to the then standard practice of clear cutting the entire right of way, existing trees were retained in the median and along the road's side so that motorists could drive in an enjoyable park-like setting. Engineers also designed Ritchie Highway to respect the route's natural topography. As a result, the corridor features a long series of low, gently-sloping hills and valleys.

Intense commercial development has robbed large sections of Ritchie Highway of its defining "scenic" features. This is especially true in north Severna Park, Pasadena and Glen Burnie, where medians have routinely been raised and paved, or converted into center turn lanes. Integrity is further lost through lane widening, the paving of once soft shoulders, and converting shoulders into exit lanes and merge areas. More than fifty traffic lights regulate vehicles along the corridor.

According to the Maryland Department of Transportation, approximately 48,975 automobiles travel Ritchie Highway each day. Congestion, combined with strip mall development leave large portions of this route unrecognizable as a scenic parkway. Information provided by the Maryland Department of Transportation reports that at last count Ritchie Highway was home to 54 shopping centers and 66 fast food franchises.

In contrast, the extreme southern part of Ritchie Highway-- the segment from Arnold to the Severn River-- remains intact and fully able to communicate the characteristics for which it is significant. The scenic and park-like qualities of this segment are further enhanced by the presence of the Governor Ritchie Memorial and Scenic Overlook (AA-3), and the recently constructed World War II memorial. Located at the highway's southern end, in an expanded section of median, these memorials stand atop a low hill overlooking the Severn River and the City of Annapolis. These small memorial parks affirm that Ritchie Highway, at least in part, remains a place of beauty and enjoyment, as well as an important and historic transportation corridor.

## 8. Significance

Survey No. AA-4

Period	Areas of Significance----Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1934-39 **Builder/Architect** Maryland Roads Commission Chief Engineer Willar

Check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D  
 and/or  
 Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G  
 Level of Significance: ☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

### Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Constructed from 1934-1939, Ritchie Highway is significant as Maryland's first dual highway, and the first state road built with the mandate to preserve natural and scenic beauty. Originally known as Annapolis Boulevard, the highway was posthumously renamed in honor of former Governor Albert C. Ritchie who between 1919 and 1934 served four terms as Maryland's chief executive. Ritchie Highway was constructed at a cost of 2.25 million dollars, principally with federal funds provided by the Public Works Administration under the Industrial Recovery Act. This undertaking was part of Ritchie's ambitious ten year/3,000 mile road building program designed to stimulate trade (1).

Ritchie Highway provided a direct route between Baltimore and Annapolis and an alternative to the meandering Baltimore and Annapolis Boulevard (Rt. 648) which roughly followed the late 18th century route from the Severn River to Baltimore (2). Upon completion, Ritchie Highway was celebrated for halving the drive time between the two cities.

Construction began in 1934 and featured two 20' roadways separated by a 6' median. Before 1934 it was typical highway practice to clear cut the right of way of trees. After much debate, it was decided that whenever possible, mature trees would be retained along the roadside and in the median to provide a pleasurable driving experience in a park-like setting. Ritchie Highway and Pulaski Highway (then in planning) were conceived as Maryland's show roads. According to State Roads Commission chief engineer Willar, the intention was to "have the road blend with the landscape rather than have it sticking out like a sore thumb" and make changes in the landscape "resembling plastic surgery rather than butchery" (3).

Earnest appeals were made to commercial interests to keep Ritchie Highway free from bill boards and development. At first these efforts were successfully, but eventually the business potential proved irresistible and the 44.1 mile parkway developed into a major commercial corridor. Ritchie Highway spawned some of the state's commercial firsts, including the first drive-in movie theater, and Harundale Mall, the first enclosed shopping mall east of the Mississippi River (4).

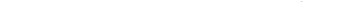
In addition, Ritchie Highway serves as an important antecedent to the 1954 Baltimore-Washington Parkway (AA-5). Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway is Maryland's fullest expression of the philosophical principals set forth in the construction of Ritchie Highway.

Only portions of Ritchie Highway retain enough integrity to be considered a scenic byway. The most intact section is located at the southern end, between Arnold and the Severn River. North Ritchie Highway, especially near Severna Park, Pasadena, and Glen Burnie retains the least integrity.

## Survey No AA-4

- ## 10. Geographical Data

Quadrangle scale 1: 24,000

H 

**11. Form Prepared by**

PS-2746

## **MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA**

**Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland**

**Survey Number: AA-4**

**Governor Ritchie Highway**

**Geographic Organization:** Western Shore

**Chronological/Developmental Period(s):** Modern Period (1930-present)

**Historic Period Theme(s):** transportation, landscape architecture, economic

**Resource Type:**

**Category:** site

**Historic Environment:** rural and suburban

**Historic Function(s) and Use(s):** highway

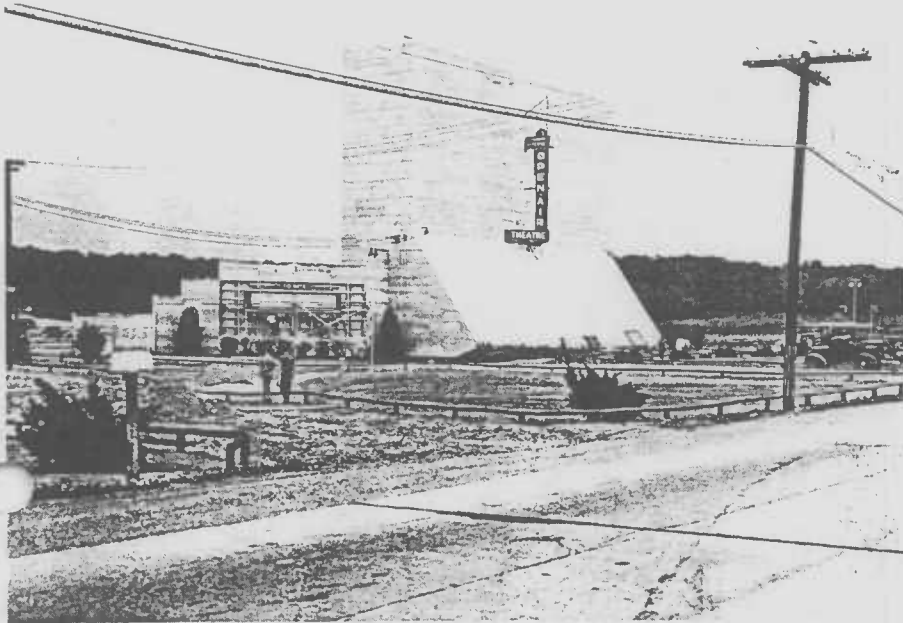
**Known Design Source:** Maryland State Roads Commission engineering staff

## Continuation Sheet (AA-4) Governor Ritchie Highway

Photos taken from Anne Arundel County: A Pictorial History, by Jacques Kelly, published by The Donning Company, Norfolk, VA (1989).



*Automobile highways encouraged construction of restaurants. Here, in 1940, is the Severn Inn, at the northern end of the Severn River Bridge at the junction of Ritchie Highway and the old Annapolis Road. News American photo, from the author's collection.*



*One of the first large commercial enterprises along Ritchie Highway was Governor Ritchie Open Air Theatre, May 12, 1939. News American photo, from the author's collection*



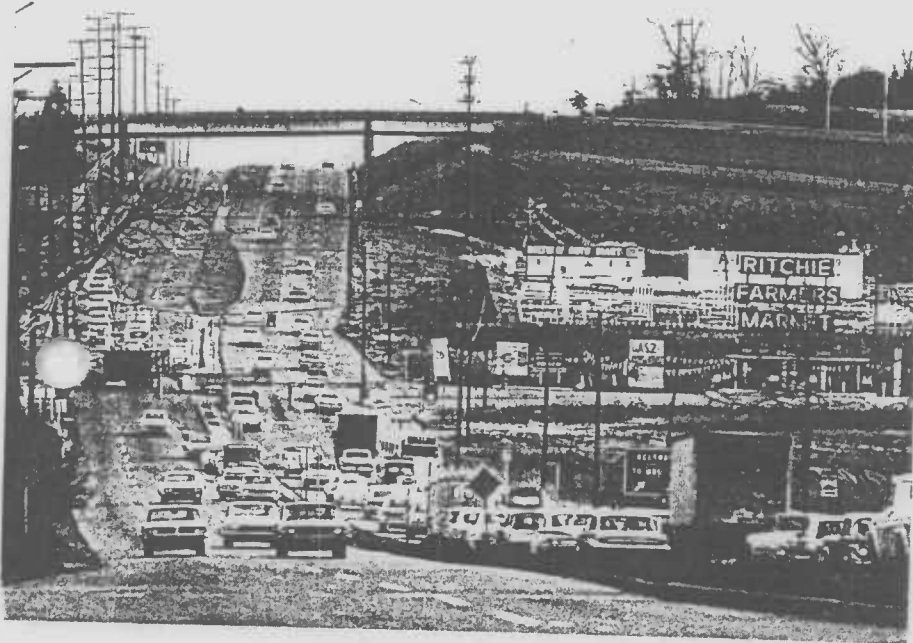
*When this state's first drive-in opened, there were open fields and orchards around a spot that would become heavily commercially developed. The movie theater closed in the 1980s and its site became a housing tract. The photo was taken in the spring of 1939. News American photo, from the author's collection*

## Continuation Sheet (AA-4) Governor Ritchie Highway

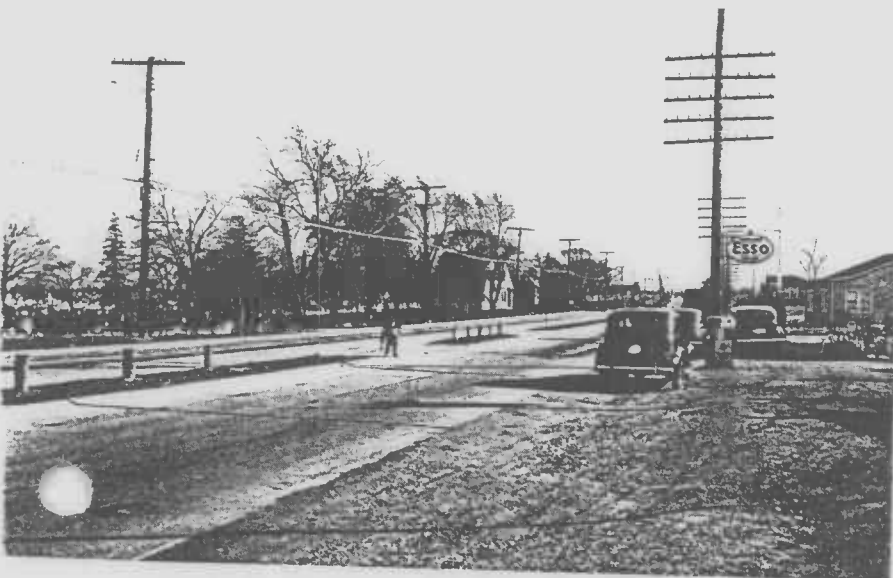
Photos taken from Anne Arundel County: A Pictorial History, by Jacques Kelly, published by The Donning Company, Norfolk, VA (1989).



*Two photos of the same scene show the changes in thirty-one years that intense suburban development brought. Here, in January 1935 traffic is light along what would be named Ritchie Highway. News American photo by Jack Shipley, from the author's collection*



*In January 1966, the same scene had changed considerably. The Baltimore Beltway has been constructed and traffic has increased many times over. The old Ritchie Farmers Market, since demolished, stands at the right. The Beltway changed living patterns and the face of the entire metropolitan area. News American photo, from the author's collection*



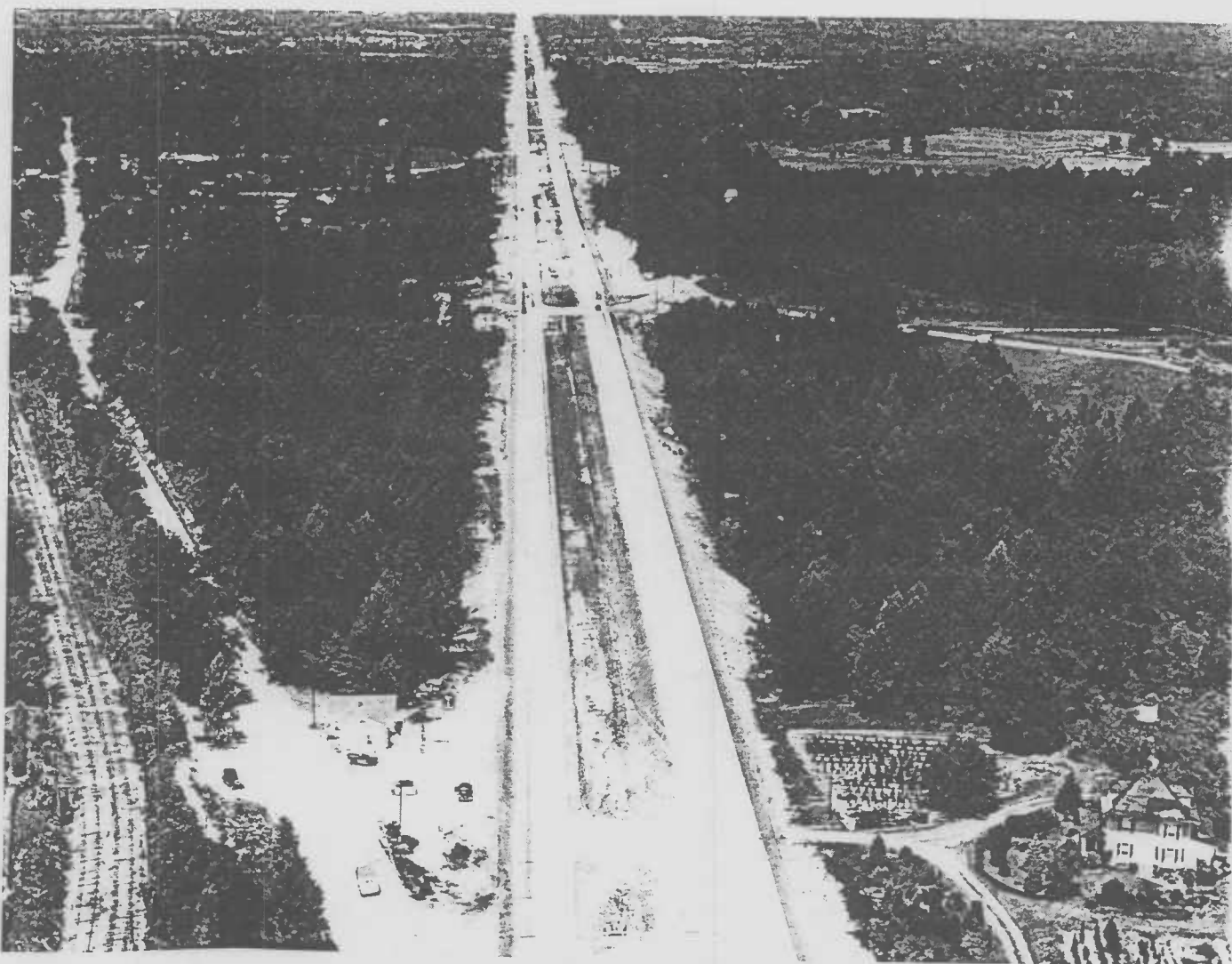
*When it opened, Ritchie Highway was considered a model of its type. This stretch faces Cedar Hill Cemetery at Wylie Avenue, March 19, 1941. Bernard Tarleton photo, Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Collection, the Peale Museum, Baltimore*



Mrs. Herbert R. O'Connor snips a black and gold ribbon for the official opening of the Governor Albert C. Ritchie Highway. April 27, 1940, some months after the dual highway had been opened to traffic. Ezra B. Whitman, chairman of the State Roads Commission, stands at the right. Navy bombers buzzed overhead and there was a parade of Boy and Girl Scouts, World War I veterans and the National Guard. News American photo by Sydney S. Sussman.



In September 1939, the last section of Ritchie Highway to be completed sliced through the pine and deciduous forests of Anne Arundel County. The photo incorporates the three main means of transportation along the Annapolis-Baltimore route. At the left are the tracks of the Baltimore & Annapolis Railroad. Paralleling them is the Baltimore and Annapolis Boulevard, with Ritchie Highway in the center. Jones Station Road is in the upper center, with Fishpaw's Amoco station at the lower left. Photo from the author's collection



#### Continuation Sheet (AA-4) Governor Ritchie Highway

Photos taken from Anne Arundel County: A Pictorial History, by Jacques Kelly, published by The Donning Company, Norfolk, VA (1989).

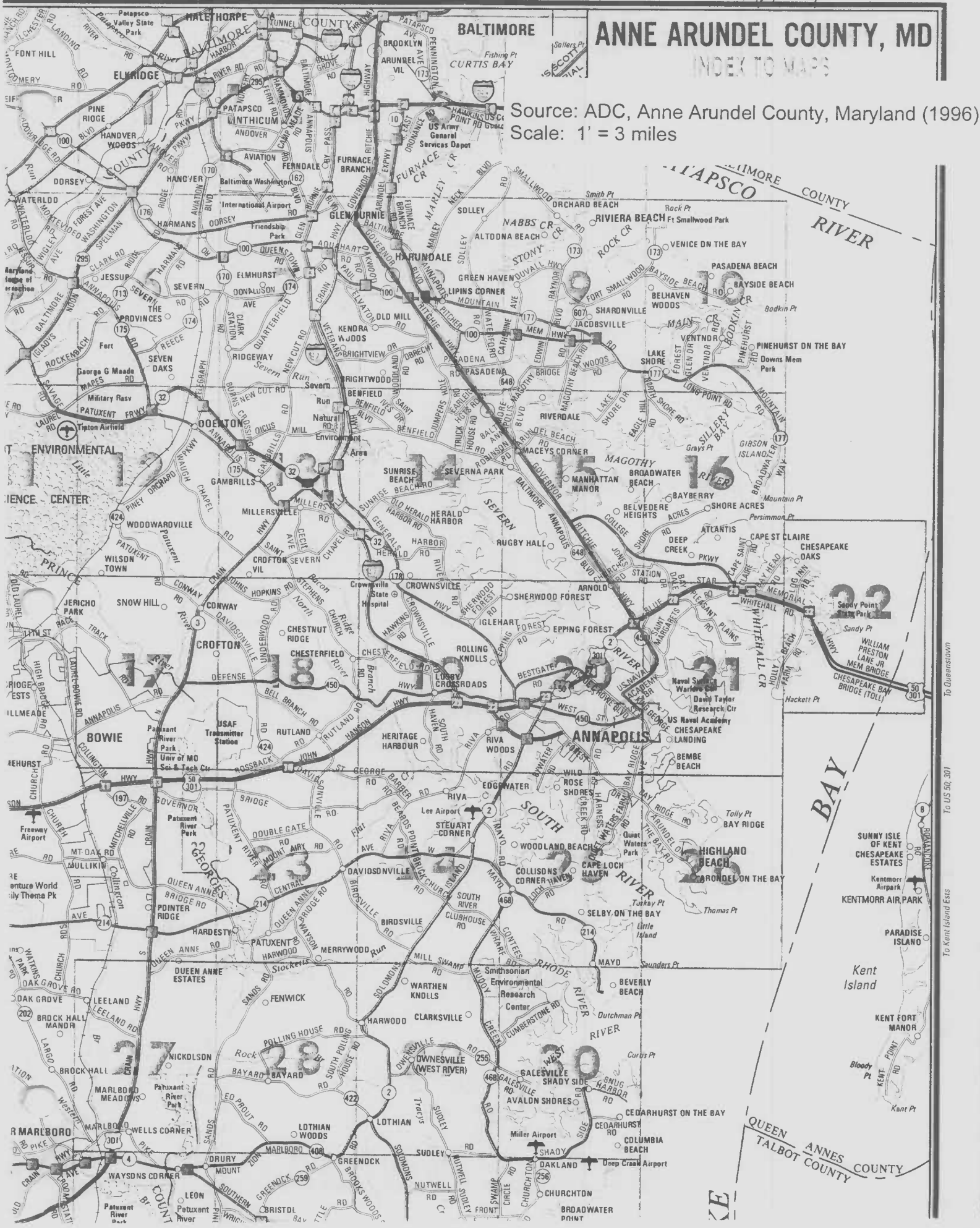
AA-4

BALTIMORE

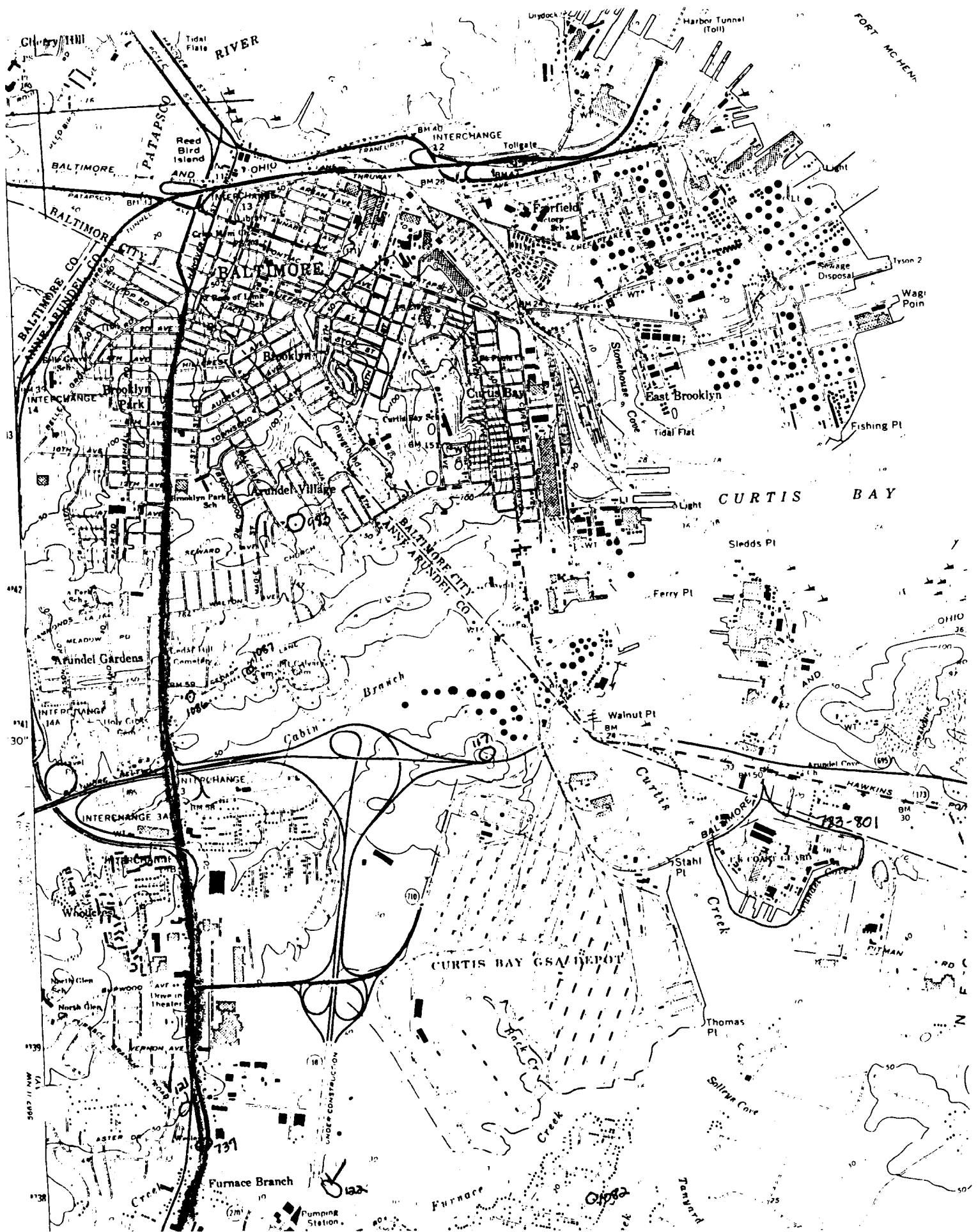
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MD

INDEX TO MAPS

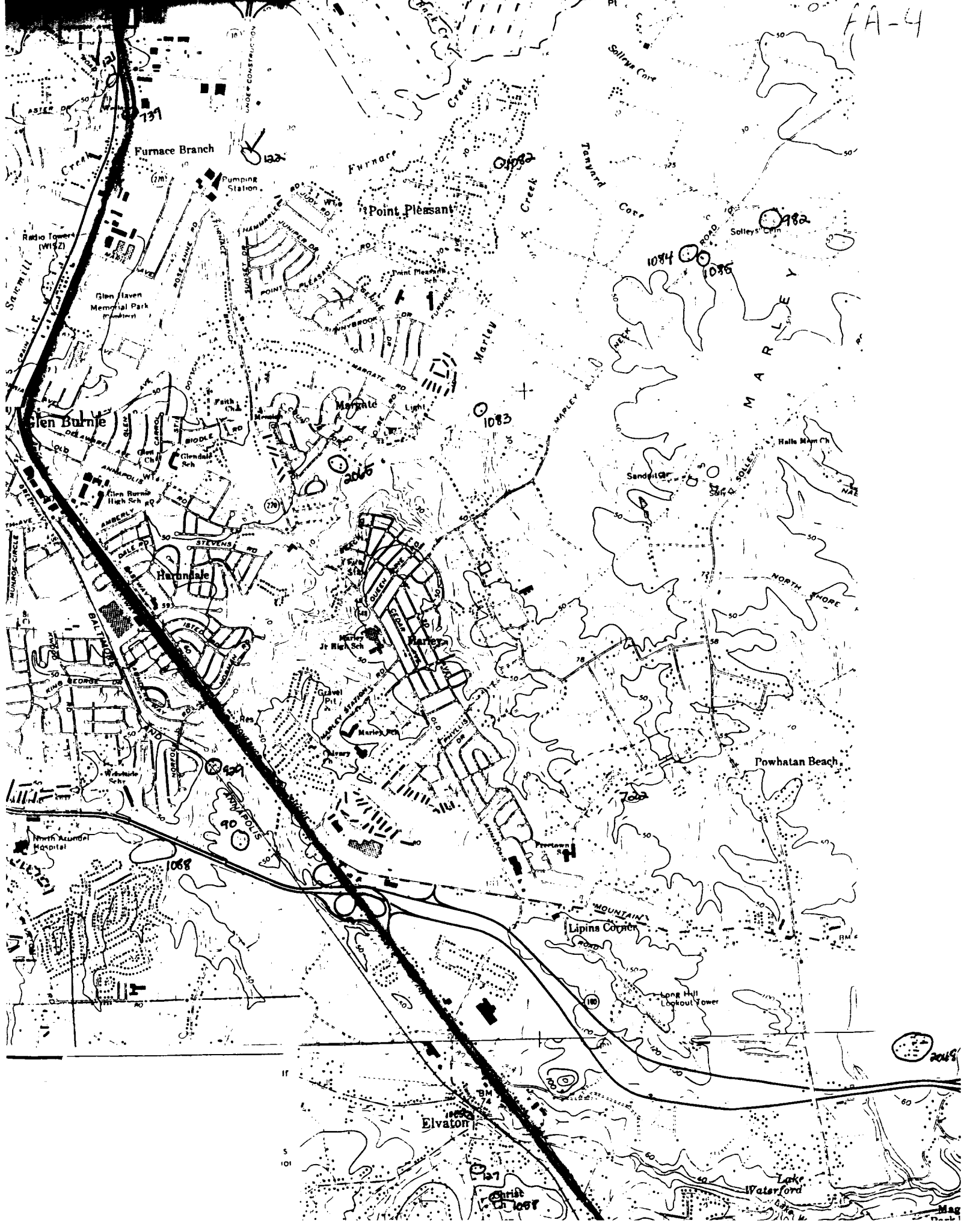
Source: ADC, Anne Arundel County, Maryland (1996)  
Scale: 1" = 3 miles



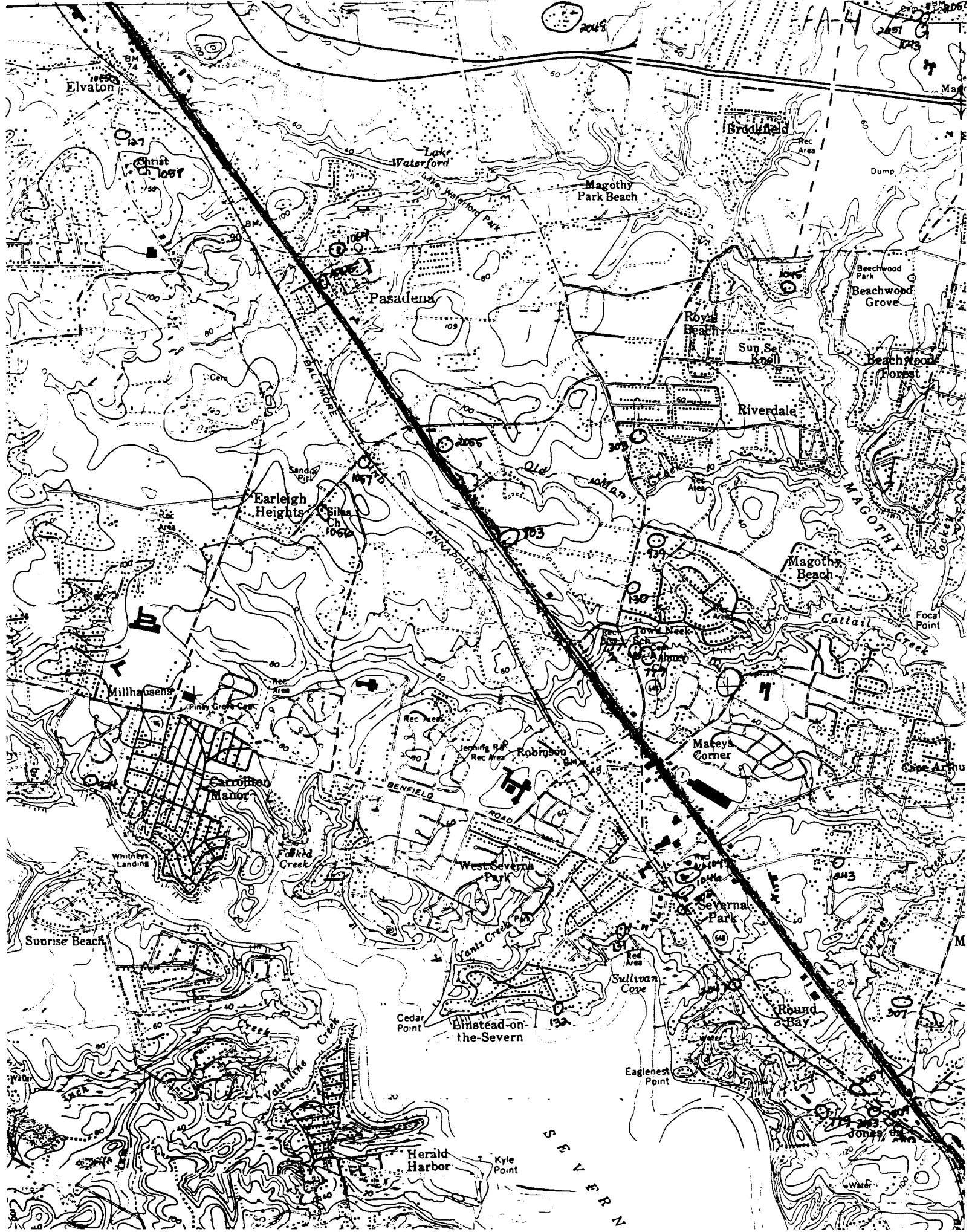
To Queensdown  
To US 50, 301  
To Kent Island Exs

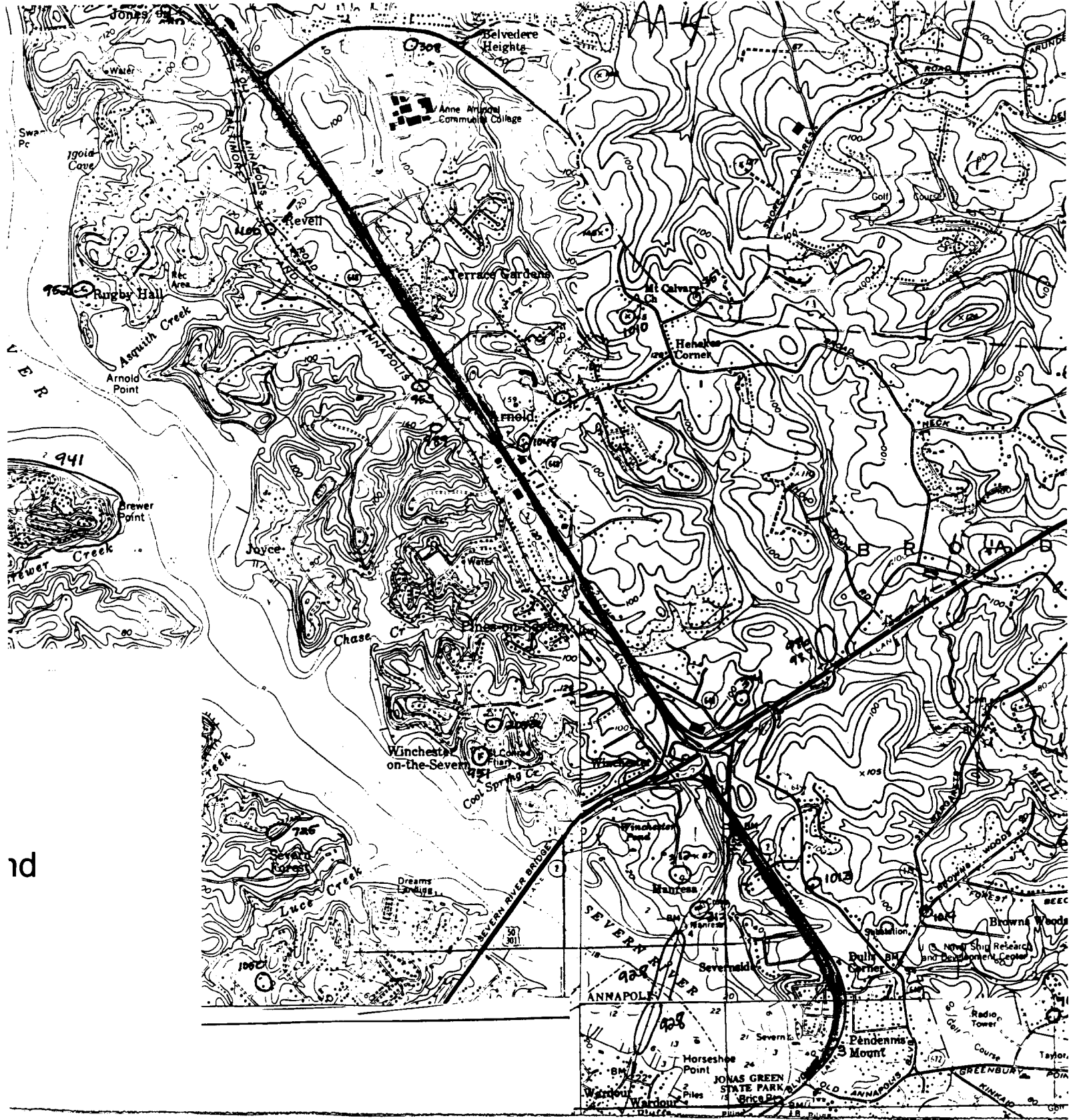


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AA-4

Governor Ritchie Parkway (Rt. 2)

Annapolis to Baltimore

by Sherri Marsh

1999

Negative at Maryland SHPO

Arnold vicinity, looking South

Photo 1 of 2





AA-4

GOVERNOR Ritchie Parkway (Rt. 2)  
Annapolis to Baltimore  
by Sherri Marsh  
1999

Severna Park vicinity, looking South  
Negative at Maryland SHPO  
Photo 2 of 2